



Indian Star Tortoise

Why in News?

A new study on the [Indian Star Tortoise](#) (*Geochelone elegans*) has found that [illegal trade](#) and **unscientific translocations** are causing major losses to the species' [genetic diversity](#) and **habitat**.

- The research calls for proper conservation strategy to combat the **fragmented distribution and recommends intensive genetic screening** of the species to implement **scientific breeding**.



What are the Key Facts about Indian Star Tortoise?

- **Habitat:**
 - **Indian star tortoises** are found across the Indian subcontinent, more specifically, in the **Central and Southern parts of India, in West Pakistan and in Sri Lanka**.
 - It is typically found in **dry, open habitats such as scrub forests, grasslands, and rocky outcroppings**.
- **Threat:**
 - The species is facing **twin challenges of a threat to its habitat** at one level and loss of its **genetic diversity** at the other.
 - Their highly fragmented habitat of the species is greatly influenced by an **increased level of urbanization and agricultural practices**.
 - Due to **subsequent hybridisation** of these species over the years, Indian star tortoises have **lost genetic diversity**.
 - Also, according to the [Wildlife Crime Control Bureau](#), **90% of the trade of Star Tortoise occurs** as part of the international pet market.
- **Protection Status:**
 - [IUCN Red List](#): Vulnerable
 - [Wild Life Protection Act 1972](#): Schedule IV
 - **Schedule IV**: This list is for species that are not endangered. It includes protected species but the **penalty for any violation is less compared to the Schedules I and II**.
 - [Convention on International Trade in Species \(CITES\)](#): Appendix I

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following: (2013)

1. Star tortoise
2. Monitor lizard
3. Pygmy hog
4. Spider monkey

Which of the above are naturally found in India?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (a)

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